

February 22, 2007

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Brandon Kaplowitz. I am twelve years old and, prior to leaving school this year, I was a sixth grade student at Grover Middle School in West Windsor-Plainsboro School District.

When I was in second grade I took the Exceptionality Initiative test. As soon as I passed it, I was really happy. When I got to work with a teacher who specialized in gifted education outside the class, I was even happier. One day, when I was in third grade, I asked my mom why they didn't have advanced history because history was my favorite subject. My mom said the schools didn't have the resources for that, so I contented myself with learning on my own. At the end of third grade, I thought fourth grade was going to be completely different (teaching you what you wanted to learn), but it wasn't.

First of all, the only thing they taught advanced was math. Also, I was no longer getting to leave class with a specialist anymore. I was still okay though, because I thought fifth grade would be better. Unfortunately, it was even worse. I was still learning only math. Thankfully, my mom met a tutor.

His name is Kalyan and he taught me as fast as I wanted to go. I started seeing him once or twice a week after school. I was at Algebra in no time. Meanwhile, at Village Upper Elementary School, the principal kept saying that he would help ease my frustration by providing a history teacher to work with me. First, it seemed like the man, who turned out to be the Social Studies coordinator, was going to teach me new things, but then he just did current event projects. A group of kids soon joined us and all they talked about were historical video games. Once again, I wasn't learning anything new.

One of the projects in fifth grade was a historical fiction board game. I was positive mine was going to be really good. It was like the game *Risk*. I downloaded the Confederates National Anthem and the Union's Anthem that played when a player wins the game. Also, I recorded famous Civil War songs for certain events in the game. Finally, after staying up late getting everything ready, I went to school excited to show my game. As soon as I brought out my music, the teacher said, "You're not allowed to have any props. You can't use your music!". I got really angry. I had just stayed up all night waiting for this moment and she said, "No!".

I had heard that in sixth grade I could join a history club. Also, I had thought that the gifted program in Middle School would be really good because they have more funding. Instead, I found no gifted program in anything but math except for a self-study program, PRISM, which was open to any student who wanted to do enrichment projects. Even A&E math was too easy. They were doing Pre - Algebra and a review on last year. By this time, I was already at Algebra 2 with my tutor.

To make matters worse, there was no history club. I told my mom that if she made me go to school I would run away. I wasn't kidding. I talked to my tutor and arranged a home schooling program. After having taken my ACT on February 10th, I am now preparing for my AP World History and SAT 2. In math, I am currently working on Pre-calculus.

I think one way the schools could fix the problems that I experienced would be to implement tracking. Right now, the schools are like a socialist society. Every student is treated the same except for a few people with special needs who get some special services. Tracking would make schools a democratic society. This is because the schools would be more free-flowing and every student would get what he or she needs. Tracking could help gifted children reach their potential, and it would help the kids, who need

more help, get the attention necessary to reach their potential.

Right now, schools seem to be teaching to the middle level, which leaves gifted students to fend for themselves. I don't want any other student to feel the same frustration I have felt. This is why I feel the schools should implement tracking in all classes. I am not being elitist. I am simply asking for what I need to reach my potential. Schools can either correct the unfair teaching practices or continue to cause their brightest students to drown in a sea of mediocrity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Brandon Kaplowitz